

Exhibit No. 17Date 1-26-07Bill No. SB-173

Montana Economic Developers Association

118 E. Seventh St.; Suite 2A Anaconda, MT 59711
ph: 406.563.5259 fx: 406.563.5476

January 23, 2007

TO: STATE ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
Carolyn Squires, Chair

Re: SB173 - Revise laws governing state-tribal economic development commission

Dear Senator Squires,

The Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA) represents over 200 professionals who work for local economic development organizations across the State of Montana. Because of their work in economic development, our members understand all too well that some of our State's reservations still continue to struggle with high unemployment and extremely limited job opportunities. At a time when much of Montana is enjoying improved prosperity due in no small part to the hard work of MEDA's membership, it is unfortunate that some of those living on our State's reservations have not been able to share in our good fortune.

MEDA's membership is well aware that expanding economic development opportunities to Montana's Indian Reservations requires the cooperation of many entities from Tribal governments to State Agencies and from local economic developers to business owners and operators. The State-Tribal Economic Development Commission has proven to be a valuable tool in fostering the relationships necessary for the expansion of economic opportunities on Montana's reservations. Our membership believes that this legislation which makes the Commission a permanent entity and also places it under the purview of the Department of Commerce will ensure that this valuable resource will continue to fulfill its vital role in the continued economic prosperity of our State.

MEDA strongly encourages the adoption of this legislation. Our members look forward to continuing to work closely with the members of the State-Tribal Economic Development Commission to make these efforts a reality.

Sincerely,


Rick Edwards, President

Cc: MEDA Board of Directors

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